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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000124

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [LY](#) [LT](#)  
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOMIN

REF: (A) MASERU 120 (B) MASERU 89 (C) MASERU 85 (D) MASERU 64

CLASSIFIED BY: JUNE CARTER PERRY, AMBASSADOR, EXEC, STATE.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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11. (U) This is an action message. See para 7.

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SUMMARY  
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12. (S) Following Foreign Minister Moleleki's return from his constituency, Ambassador met with him March 6 to review recent developments including the on-going review of the January 29 shooting at his home; the need for a continued peaceful approach to Lesotho's 2007 national elections; and progress on an Article 98 agreement. As in his meeting with the CAI (Ref C), the FOMIN stated his conviction that the attack on him was politically motivated and orchestrated by Communications Minister Tom Thabane who, like Moleleki, had been considered a contender for succeeding Prime Minister Mosisili. In addition, Moleleki alleged the Libyan Government was financing Thabane and the Police Commissioner was dragging her feet on the investigation due to allegiance to Thabane. Ambassador observed that Lesotho had held peaceful "model" local and national elections over the past several years. She urged continued democratic progress and peaceful transitions of power at all levels. Moleleki concurred and said the ruling Lesotho Congress of Democracy (LCD) party leaders were committed to the same goals. Regarding Article 98, Moleleki welcomed Ambassador's comments (based on Ambassador's Washington discussions with AF, L and PM), and suggested U.S./GOL meetings over the next two weeks to develop agreed-upon text to be signed by FOMIN and Ambassador. (Post requests Department's recommended language for final paragraphs.) We cannot substantiate Moleleki's claims about Thabane, but the sense of the diplomatic community is that the attack on the FOMIN was politically motivated. We and other donors are reinforcing peaceful resolution of any issues and continued electoral progress. There will be on-going dialogue toward an Article 98 agreed text; post is pressing for completion soon despite MFA's travel over the next several weeks. End Summary

13. (S) Minister Moleleki, when asked about follow up to the assault on him at his home, stated that there had been no arrests and no real investigation by the Commissioner of Police Evelyn Letoane. He said that in his view, the assailants were hired by Communications Minister Thabane who had opposed Moleleki in a race for the ruling parties Executive Committee. (Note: Moleleki had not previously specifically named Thabane

as the behind the scenes perpetrator of this attack.) However, during our meeting, Moleleki was not hesitant in pointing the finger at Thabane, recalling that this aging political figure has served in every government since independence and has played a major role in Lesotho's political development. The FOMIN re-hashed the Party Congress meetings of January 27 through the early hours of January 29, re-emphasizing his 700 vote margin victory over Thabane during a fractious LCD conference, and he emphasized the general political support he had among members of the party. According to Moleleki, he had a "middle of the night" meeting with the deputy of the Libyan Embassy who confirmed that the Libyan Ambassador had been funneling monies not only to Thabane, but to Thabane's wife who resides in Johannesburg and reportedly travels internationally on a frequent basis to many countries including Libya. We cannot confirm that Thabane has received these funds although the Libyan Government has purchased large ads in the Maseru press asserting Ghaddafi's loyalty to the country and his support of large relief efforts by Libya to the people of Lesotho.

¶4. (C) In response to the AMB's question about filing a police report, Moleleki emphatically stated that the Commissioner of Police had not really led an investigation and had only "requested a statement" from him 4 weeks after the incident following direct orders from the Deputy Prime Minister to do so. He then alleged that the Commissioner of Police is, in fact, a supporter of Minister Thabane and is working hand-in-hand with him; therefore it is not surprising, in the Foreign Minister's opinion, that no real investigation has taken place. Per FOMIN, to counter the lack of police action, the Government of Lesotho is setting up, under the Deputy Prime Minister's oversight, its own independent investigating committee, which is expected to convene within about a week. The composition of this investigative body would comprise government and independent members who would not hesitate to come forward with exhibits he claims they have in hand which will point to Thabane as the

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mastermind behind this attack.

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The Democratic Process  
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¶5. (C) The Ambassador emphasized the importance of peace and security in light of the upcoming 2007 national elections in Lesotho. The country had successfully held municipal elections in 2005 under peaceful, non-violent conditions and it was important that this model be followed in the next electoral period. We noted that Lesotho had set an example in its strengthening of democracy. Moleleki concurred and said that was certainly the view of the Prime Minister and of the ruling party; they want to move forward in a non-violent and democratic manner. We also discussed the peaceful progress of elections in South Africa and the Ambassador reinforced the importance of this tradition being upheld in the SADC countries as well as in Lesotho itself. Moleleki advised that the GOL has decided to hold both national and local elections together in 2007. (Note: This has not yet been announced publicly.) Also, the PM has asked for extension of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) members' terms, i.e., to delay the 2006 rotation of experienced commission members until after the national elections. (A number of the commissioners were set to rotate in April under existing regulations.)

¶6. (C) We continued the discussion of the importance of security, and Moleleki stated that he considered the United States an important partner in the fight against terrorism and even individual cases of violence, such as the one in which he was recently attacked, should be considered in that context. We agreed that as democratic partners, we had a responsibility to take on the counter-terrorism fight regionally as well as globally. (Note: In this regard, we delivered the points on the U.S.-India Initiative on March 3.) (Ref A)

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¶7. (C) Moving on to broader security matters, the Ambassador thanked the Foreign Minister for the Government of Lesotho's willingness to proceed with an Article 98 agreement and reviewed with him areas of concurrence on a draft text and brought to his attention the areas where revisions for a final text would be necessary. For example, U.S. law is sufficient and it would be inappropriate in such an agreement as suggested by the Government of Lesotho to amend its criminal law. The Ambassador pressed Moleleki for a completion date in April. He agreed that a near term date was desirable, that it was important to get this done as soon as possible and that the Ambassador and FOMIN would sign in Maseru. We discussed further review we would undertake with MFA and the GOL (Attorney General's office) on specific points. Moleleki was interested in a U.S. legal team's visit to Lesotho if possible. Post requests Department provide suggested language for relevant paragraphs.

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Comment  
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¶8. (C) Moleleki's allegations against Minister Thabane have also been heard by other members of the diplomatic corps. Reportedly, Thabane has denied any involvement but there has been no public statement to this effect. Some in the diplomatic community have questioned why a statement from the Prime Minister himself has not been forthcoming, although the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) did recognize in Parliament that the assault had taken place and there would be an investigation. Interestingly, Minister of Trade Malie, now Secretary General of the ruling party, made a public announcement that the incident was criminal in nature and not political. The international community as a whole believes that the attack was politically motivated and that it comes from within the ranks of the LCD. The Foreign Minister has made his case in a dramatic manner to envoys, but independent verification of exactly what happened by whom remains absent. In our conversations with government officials, the importance of peaceful transfer of power, non-violent and peaceful elections and adherence to the democratic process have been emphasized. Other diplomats are making the same points. We intend to work as in previous elections with U.S. and international organizations as well as the Government of Lesotho to provide pre-electoral training and observers.

¶9. (C) We are following up with MFA to continue work on Article ¶98. Post believes provision of suggested language will be the most effective route to follow. (Minister Moleleki will be traveling to Libya for AU and bilateral meetings over the coming weeks and also intends to travel to Dubai.) End Comment.  
PERRY